

REMARKS

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) have been overcome by the amendments to independent claims 1, 7, 13, 19 and 24.

As the PTO recognizes in MPEP §2142:

The Examiner bears the initial burden of factually supporting any *prima facie* conclusion of obviousness. If the examiner does not produce a *prima facie* case, the applicant is under no obligation to submit evidence of nonobviousness.

The USPTO clearly cannot establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness in connection with the amended claims for the following reasons.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) provides that:

[a] patent may not be obtained ... if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains ... (emphasis added)

Thus, when evaluating a claim for determining obviousness, all limitations of the claim must be evaluated. However, the references, alone, or in combination, do not teach a load dependent inductor including an air gap defined by first and second *non-parallel* opposed surfaces. For example, U.S. patent application publication 2004/0046634 to Gokhale only discloses air gaps 62 and 72 in figures 15 and 16 respectively and described in paragraphs 59 and 60 as not being a "constant air gap" and showing two distinct air gaps g1 and g2 and all surfaces are parallel. The references applied by the Examiner in this rejection do not teach or suggest that the air gap surfaces be non-parallel. To the contrary, Gokhale only discloses parallel surfaces for the air gap.

Therefore, it is impossible to render the subject matter of the claims as a whole obvious based on a single reference or any combination of the references, and the above explicit terms of the statute cannot be met. As a result, the USPTO's burden of factually supporting a *prima facie* case of obviousness clearly cannot be met with respect to the claims, and a rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is not applicable.

There is still another compelling, and mutually exclusive, reason why the references cannot be combined and applied to reject the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

The PTO also provides in MPEP §2142:

[T]he Examiner must step backward in time and into the shoes worn by the hypothetical "person of ordinary skill in the art" when the invention was unknown and just before it was made. In view of all factual information, the Examiner must then make a determination whether the claimed invention "as a whole" would have been obvious at that time to that person. ...[I]mpermissible hindsight must be avoided and the legal conclusion must be reached on the basis of the facts gleaned from the prior art.

Here, the references do not teach, or even suggest, the desirability of the combination because neither teaches nor suggests providing a load dependent inductor including an air gap defined by first and second *non-parallel* opposed surfaces as set forth above.

Thus, neither of these references provides any incentive or motivation supporting the desirability of the combination. Therefore, there is simply no basis in the art for combining the references to support a 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of the claims.

In this context, the MPEP further provides at §2143.01:

The mere fact that references can be combined or modified does not render the resultant combination obvious unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of the combination. (emphasis in original)

In the above context, the courts have repeatedly held that obviousness cannot be established by combining the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention, absent some teaching, suggestion or incentive supporting the combination. In the present case it is clear that the USPTO's combination arises solely from hindsight based on the invention without any showing, suggestion, incentive or motivation in either reference for the combination as applied to the claims. Therefore, for this mutually exclusive reason, the USPTO's burden of factually supporting a *prima facie* case of obviousness clearly cannot be met with respect to the claims, and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is not applicable.

Therefore, independent claims 1,7,13,19 and 24 and their respective dependent claims are submitted to be allowable.

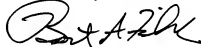
In view of all of the above, the allowance of claims 1-3, 5-9, 11-15, 17-20 and 22-24 is respectfully requested.

The amended claims are supported by the original application.

No fees, including extension of time fees, are believed necessary for consideration of the present paper. However, if any fees, including extension of time fees, are necessary, the extension of time is hereby requested, and the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees, including those for the extension of time, to Haynes and Boone, LLP's Deposit Account No. 08-1394.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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Susan C. Lien